

MARC GABA
PROPERTY OF SPACE



E s s a y b y R a y m o n d d e B o r j a



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PROPERTY OF SPACE

Essay by Raymond de Borja

Philippine Proposition Inc. & Artery Art Space

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All images that do not appear in the exhibit could be printed as 16 x 24-inch lambda prints (edition of 2 with one artist copy). If interested in acquiring, contact Artery Art Space at arteryartspace@gmail.com.



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RAYMOND DE BORJA

THE IMAGE AS A KNOWLEDGE OF SPACE

This is a book of images, of the image as space, of the image as a production of space, *partes extra partes*, of the distance between image and text. An image is not an object. Objects contain matter; an image contains. It is a book about what an image can contain, about what a text can contain, how a work can conflate image and text, then how in such conflation relations are severed. I propose that it says the image has a knowledge of space. The image is an agent of epistemology. What knowledge does it contain? As an agent, it acquires and creates. It knows of the nature and availability of space. It creates them. The book starts with a premise. *Premise (Duchamp)*. Then *Premise (Question of Trespass)*. Remember that a premise is a proposition. And that the premise is a place. Space is delimited in the declaration of place. It is a double operation: an image produces knowledge of the evening, the silhouette of a water tank, two burlap garbage bags, a toilet, a no-parking sign; then the no-parking sign carves out a separate space within the space. A proper space. Inappropriable. Then *Premise (Guest)*. Now we have three premises, enough to form an argumentative structure. We understand that these are not pictures of a landscape. "The landscape," Jean-Luc Nancy writes, "is the contrary of a ground." "In it must be entirely surface," and surface alone "throughout." Instead we have something like receding picture frames - the ground of evening, the figure of a place (the silhouette of water tank, a makeshift eatery, corrugated roof for a wall), and the becoming of a figure, the fuzzy delimitations of no-parking spaces. So the space in the image is no longer representational space. No longer just figure and ground. But a virtual space, where we see the taking place of space.

Then a section where we are shown closer shots of the no-parking signs. *Sign (Sculpture)* – where the text is almost effaced. *Sign (Leap)* – where the sign is broken. In *Sign (Alphabet the Accordion)*, the sign is almost illegible. In *Sign (Meadow)*, it is draped in leafy-shadows. Here, the no-parking space that is taking place (that took place in the Premises) is larger than the frame of the image. Becoming is outside the border. What we have is the sign broken, estranged, a rupture in the signifying chain, an estrangement in the signifying relations. “Painting silences language,” Giorgio Agamben says “returning the thing to itself, to its namelessness.” In *Middle Distance*, the signs waver in their namelessness in the spaces between figure and ground.

But the no-parking sign, revealed in its not-referring to the no-parking space, is a potentially genial trace. What it reveals, presents, creates, borrowing again from Agamben, is the thing in its “pure sayability.” Such that an image, as space, has knowledge of the pure sayability of objects:



Page from Where We Stand
Oil on canvas
24 x 30 inches
2016

Dear Marc,

I want to use the form of the letter in engaging with the works found in the exhibit, and the form of essay when discussing the images in the book. By placing these formal restrictions, I hope to enact something of a shift in approach (a difference in attitudes, which I feel is imperative, between engaging with an exhibit, and essaying a response to a book), and also to enact a formal border between the site of the exhibit and the site of the book, when, as you say the "images move across the two sites."

When you directed my attention to the impasto stripes you added above the "AN" in the "MANILA" of this painting, and then wrote of your recent interest in exploring how abstraction incorporates content, I was reminded of Rosalind Krauss's essay on the Grid where she talks about how the grid "by its very abstraction, conveyed one of the basic laws of knowledge - the separation of the perceptual screen from that of the 'real' world." I think that through Krauss, it becomes apparent that what abstraction contains, the content it incorporates, is not knowledge, but something like the knowledge of knowledge.

And isn't that (The Knowledge of Knowledge) the title of one of your shows which had the Surface Variation series a couple of years back?

—•••—

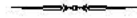


Love (They, Utrillo, Alteration Make)
Oil and inkjet print on canvas
47 inches x 60 inches
2016

When you mentioned Maurice Utrillo, his paintings, which reveals what you described as the clarity of space between the shut buildings of early 20th century Paris, I thought about Utrillo's skies which I felt are central to his paintings. As if all the impressionist buildings, streets and trees were made to frame the clarity of his skies.

I think that by containing in this one work a number of gestures - impasto lines, geometric planes, unpainted photograph - the image becomes a site of contested

epistemologies. The abstract elements attempt to organize knowledge of a space, while the unpainted space (if one were to think of the photograph as a limit of naturalistic representation) attempts to present it, despite the agency engulfing its organization.



Apologia for Mondrian
Oil and inkjet print on canvas
12 inches x 16 inches
2016



In appropriating Mondrian's *Composition with Yellow Lines*, and keeping only the yellow, where you deftly replaced (and also pointed out) that the *blanc* (white) is replaced with a blank, and is also a *noir* (both the color black, and the *noir* of the photograph), I am fascinated with how through an entanglement among words and an actual compositional transformation, color becomes space. Mondrian, of course figured a lot in the Krauss essay. But there is also in her essay a commentary on the paintings of Seurat, Signac, Cross, and Luce, who while applying in their paintings

lessons of physiological optics were in fact making more abstract art - the critic Felix Feneon observing that "science began to yield its opposite, which is symbolism."

In the final section, titled *Space*, the space produced by the no-parking sign finds itself in conflict with the space seemingly produced by other elements in the image: the streetlamp in *Space (Prayer)*, the broken sidewalk in *Space (Altruism)*, the private space in *Space (Visible Life)*. In the final image, we are presented with an empty sign, which we can take as a pun on the empty signifier, the floating signifier, which in our experience of this book has moved along a floating chain of signifieds: political, epistemological, phenomenological and ontological.

SOURCES

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Raymond de Borja's book of poems and collage, *they day daze*, was published by High Chair in 2012. He is working on his second book tentatively titled, *Given*.

PROPERTY OF SPACE

PREMISE



Premise (Duchamp)



Premise (Question of Trespass)



Premise (Guest)

SIGN



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Sign (Sculpture)



Sign (Game)



Sign (Tie)



Sign (Orientalizing)



Sign (Leap)



Sign (Meadow)

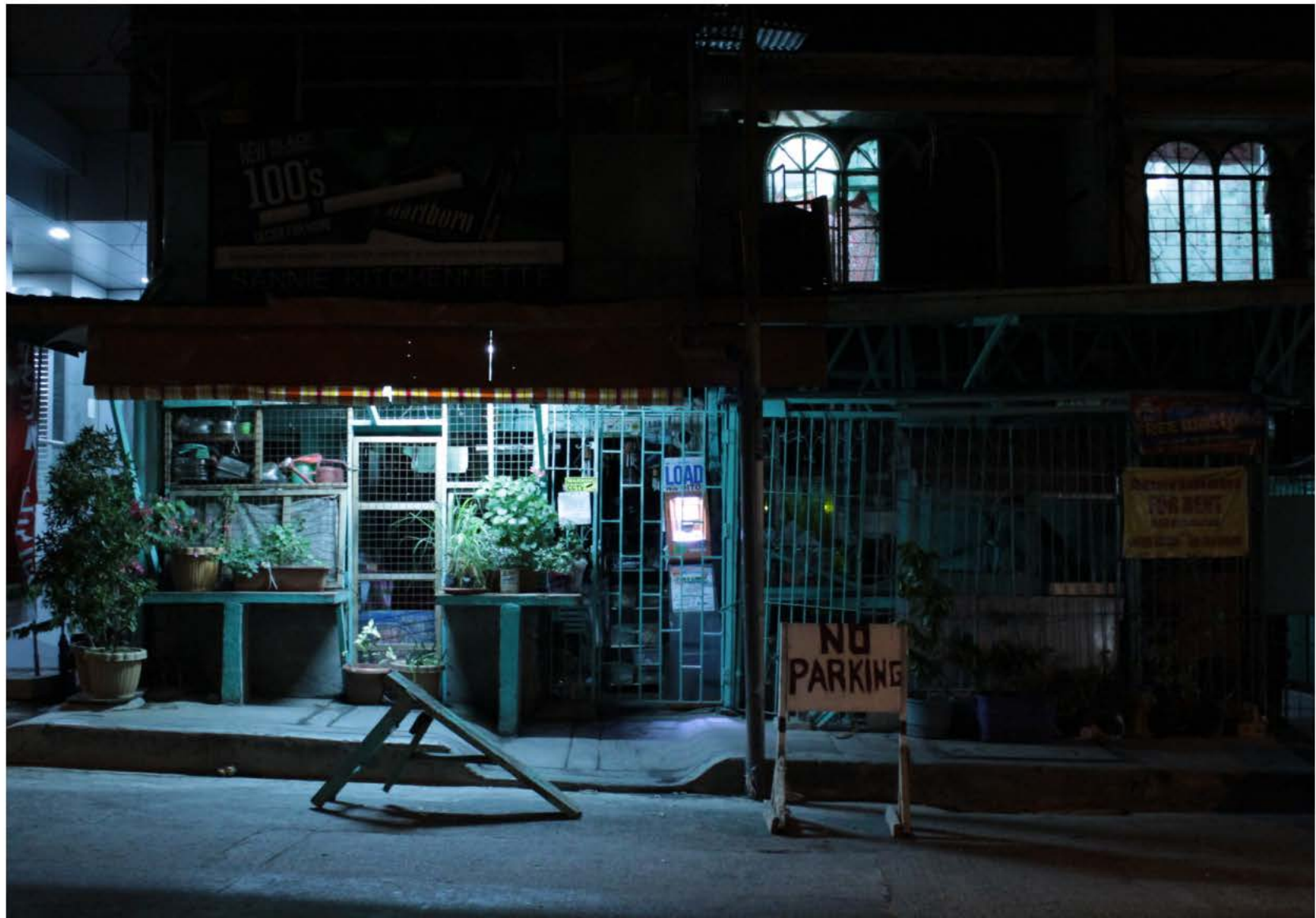
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Indivisible (Diplomacy)



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Indivisible (First Love)

SPACE



Space (Prayer)



Space (Altruism)



Space (Visible Life)



Space (Only If)



Space (Language)



Space (Property Of)

APPENDIX: THE EXHIBIT

- A** *Ellipses (triptych)* | Lambda prints | 16 x 74 inches | 2016
- B** *Visible Life* | Lambda print | 12 x 16.6 inches | Single edition with 1 artist copy | 2016
- C** *Gate* | Lambda print | 8.35 x 9.5 inches | Single edition with 1 artist copy | 2016
- D** *The Spratly Membrane* | Two-channel video projections, two LED projectors, silkscreen, wood, metal, oil and latex
114 x 57 x 31 inches | 2016
- E** *Page from Where We Stand* | Oil on canvas | 24 x 30 inches | 2014-2016
- F** *Door Ajar that Oceans Are* | Oil on canvas | 48 x 60 inches | 2016
- G** *Apologia for Mondrian* | Oil and inkjet print on canvas | 12 x 16 inches | 2016
- H** *Territorialism* | Charcoal and inkjet print on canvas | Variable dimensions | 2016
- I** *Space (Property of)* | Lambda print | 20 x 30 inches | Single edition with 1 artist copy | 2016
- J** *Love (They, Utrillo, Alteration Make)* | Oil and inkjet print on canvas | 47 x 60 inches | 2016
- K** *No Parking* | Lambda print | 8 x 12 inches | Single edition with 1 artist copy | 2016





B



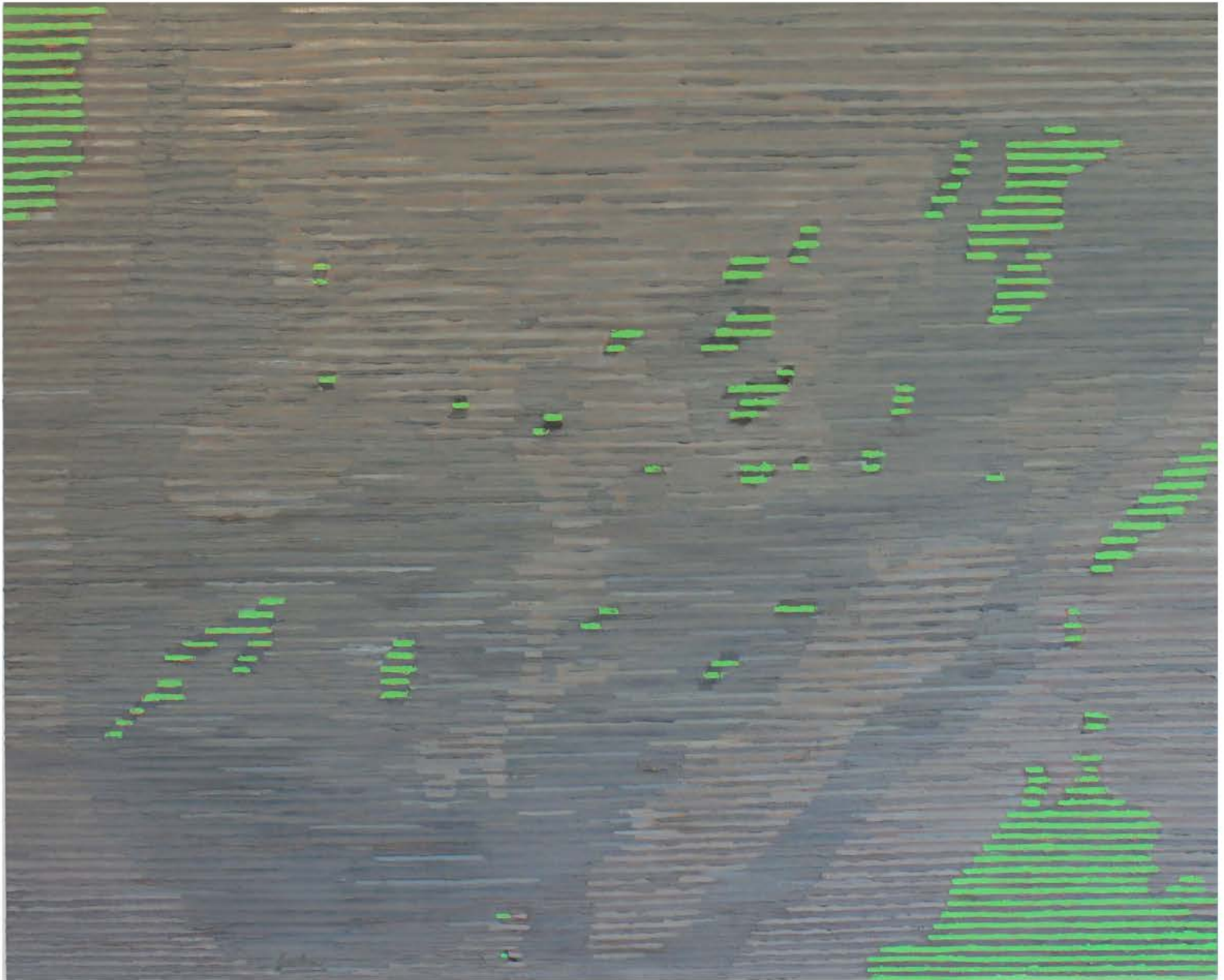
C



D







F



G



H







K







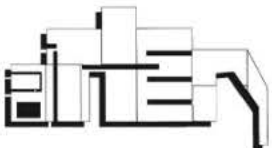
MARC GABA
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June 18 to July 09, 2016

ARTERY ART SPACE PRESENTS A MULTI-MEDIA EXHIBIT BY MARC GABA ENTITLED "PROPERTY OF SPACE" DRAMATIZING THE TENSIONS THAT CREATE SPACE IN THE FORMATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY, THEREBY TOUCHING THE OBJECT OF ART; SUCH THAT, CONCEPTS OF OWNERSHIP, DEMOCRACY, AND AUTONOMY ARE PUT INTO QUESTION THROUGH THE PRISM OF LANGUAGE AND ITS REPRESENTATION. THE PREMISE OF THE EXHIBIT IS ANCHORED BY THE UBIQUITOUS NO-PARKING SIGN FOUND AROUND THE METROPOLITAN AREA WHICH WERE THEN PHOTOGRAPHED AT NIGHT TO VEER AWAY FROM SCRUTINY, EFFECTIVELY RENDERING THE WORKS TO CONCEPTUALIZE ABSENCE AS A DEICTIC MARKER, AN EMPTY SIGNIFIER OF PROPRIETARY RULES ON TERRITORIAL RIGHTS.

THROUGHOUT THE EXHIBIT THE DEVICES OF COLLOCATION (SO THAT MIXED MEDIA IS PROPERLY SEEN AS A CONCEPTUAL STRATEGY) AND IMAGE MIGRATION (AS THE EXHIBIT ALSO FEATURES A DOWNLOADABLE BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS, SOME OF WHICH WERE USED AS A MEDIUM IN THE PAINTINGS) WERE APPLIED IN ORDER TO EXPLORE THE INSTABILITY OF SIGNS AND THEIR PURPOSE. DISTINCTIVE OF PAINTING AS A CONCEPTUAL PRACTICE, MARKED WITH DIAGRAMMATIC PATTERNS AND LAYERS OF INTUITIVE VIGNETTES, THE WORKS IN THE EXHIBIT INVOKE EARLY 20TH -CENTURY ARTISTS MAURICE UTRILLO, PIET MONDRIAN, EVEN THE POET EMILY DICKINSON, PONDERING ON THE DETERRITORIALIZATION OF CONVENTION AND THE REORGANIZATION OF THE VISIBLE, WHERE THE GROUND OF MEANING IS THE UNSETTLED. VIA PAINTING AND VIDEO INSTALLATION, THE SHOW ALSO ABSTRACTLY REFERENCES THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT AND THE UNFINISHED TERRITORIAL DISPUTE OF THE SPRATLY ISLANDS, TO USE ART AS POLITICAL CRITIQUE ON SOCIAL REALITY.

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